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THE UNIVERSITY JOURNAL.

BY JOSEPH S. AUERBACH.

FOR more reasons than one it will be a distinct misfortune if some lasting educational benefits do not result from the suggestions made by Mr. George Harvey in his recent "Bromley" lectures delivered at Yale University.

At the close of the first lecture, which set forth—with peculiar interest, as the readers of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* of last month had the privilege of knowing—his conception of true journalism, there was distributed to the audience a newspaper prepared by Mr. Harvey, as of a given day in February last, and called in courtesy "The Bromley Morning News." This was termed by him a "sample," but others, more free to express their opinion, would term it a model of what the daily newspaper might be.

Though consisting of but four pages, one of which was devoted to advertising, it contained timely and thoughtful editorials and comment, together with the current news of the day and matters of interest rearranged to meet the needs of the general reader. It was, in form and substance, a creditable publication of itself and more particularly in what it was intended to typify, and reminded one by its appearance and seriousness and the absence from its columns of senseless and objectionable items of one of the great London dailies. It was pleasing to the eye and to the mind, and through it the reader looked out upon the activities of life and not into its sewers.

The second lecture consisted of a discussion of the considerations which should be controlling in the preparation of such a newspaper as a business enterprise and presented the suggestion that such a publication in a University would afford a unique opportunity for the training of men in a real school of journalism.

These two features were exhaustively and eloquently presented by Mr. Harvey, and do not need to be reinforced by further reasons or even statement.

It is intended in what follows rather to consider briefly the general, far-reaching, beneficial influence such a University journal would have upon the life of our undergraduates.

Already in our larger Universities there are maintained publications which are daily newspapers in name, and which are frequently profitable to the students conducting them, though they have few, if any, general news items; while their advertisements merely testify to the heroic efforts on the part of relatives or friends of the management in securing their insertion. Chronicling, as they do, only the engagements of students in the athletic field and in the class-room, they are like the Gazette of Oxford that lays no claim to being anything more than what it really is. In a certain sense, therefore, the proposed University journal would be the outcome or evolution of the present daily.

At the outset it is necessary to recall Mr. Harvey's idea, that for the supervisory heads of such a University journal there should be selected an experienced editor-in-chief and a managing editor, contributing little or nothing, but in the main censoring the contributions of the students.

With them could be associated a sufficiently large number of associate student editors, in order that all of the time of any one student need not be taken from his other duties, and that abundant opportunity might also be afforded them to write with care, and after reflection. Some students from time to time might be called upon to do reportorial work in a neighboring city, though doubtless not a great amount of effort in this direction need be expended. Editors are not necessarily made out of reporters, any more than good lawyers out of stenographers or even routine clerks.

From the beginning the students associated with the several departments of such a journal would have before them the conditions essential for all correct composition, something to say, and instruction, constant practice, and accordingly experience in the art of saying it. All the details of the well-defined business of journalism would probably not be thoroughly learned in the conduct of a publication maintained by an endowment, but its essential principles could be mastered, and in the right atmosphere, where it would come to be understood that it is not the sole pur-

pose of a newspaper to make money at all hazards and under all conditions.

If it be said that such a publication would not be profitable in the business sense, the answer is that no department of instruction in a University is even self-supporting. Every undergraduate is in a very practical way a pensioner on the bounty of others. What is paid for his tuition represents little of its real cost, which must be provided for out of the income from funds of the University. Such a journal would have to depend for its maintenance on a special endowment, which, if possible, should be large enough to provide for a weekly periodical having the same relation to the daily paper as the "Nation" has to the "Evening Post," and there might also be a monthly magazine. The amount of this fund would necessarily be large, though doubtless the supervisory editors would be willing to sacrifice a large part of their legitimate income, just as professors in the University regard the privilege of their occupation as a substantial part of the compensation for their life-work; and there seems to be no good reason why each student should not be required to be a subscriber to such publications, and thus make an important contribution to their support.

One of two things it is reasonably certain would result. The University in which such a project should be first carried out would have, in one department of education, an immeasurable advantage over other institutions of learning, or, still better, the example thus set would of necessity be followed by them.

Yet it may well be that the collateral advantages of such publications in teaching men to think clearly and use the English language with vigor and grace and precision, of inculcating in them a true love of literature and in setting up higher standards of thought and purpose, would grow to proportions which would overshadow the advantages of training men in a real school of journalism, important as this at the present day must be admitted to be.

It is idle to deny that among the undergraduates in our institutions of learning, and with us all as a people, there is an increasing indifference to the quality of our English speech and writing. The exception is to see the student whose speech is not composed of about equal parts of inexpressive slang and slovenly English, while the writing of many of our contemporary

authors even in what may be termed ambitious work is in the matter of style often unworthy. If it be true, as has been said, that literature is a by-product of conversation, we shall have to go far back in the institution of our reforms if we are really concerned as to the well-being of our language. We have before us no easy task, for, as Tacitus has said, the pursuit and love of letters are more easily destroyed than revived.

We no longer as of old regard our legacy of the English language and English literature as a priceless possession, and we have lost more by our neglect than we are apt to appreciate. To a large degree, taste and even conduct have been injuriously affected; high standards have been lowered and ideals lost sight of; the beneficial practice of reading aloud has been abandoned, and on and off the stage graceful enunciation of the English language has come to be a forgotten art; devotion to literature has become a task, and even the Bible, with all its literary and spiritual inspiration, is a closed and neglected book. As a substitute for what we have lost we have a smattering of knowledge concerning many subjects paraded in phraseology having no proper relation to the language of literature. As a rule, due attention is no longer paid to the use of the most appropriate words and phrases for the presentation and interpretation of ideas, and a certain nervelessness and lack of structure or a hopeless monotone in expression may be said to be the consequence even when the work is not wholly devoid of merit. To apply to many of our contemporary authors what Mr. Arthur Symons says of some critics, they laboriously hunt for and write round exact words of definition; or, to coin a phrase, we may say, the *groping* style characterizes much of the writing of to-day.

It is unusual to find recent graduates of Universities able to write with accuracy and precision of statement, even when trained for the profession of the law, though this qualification is almost essential to success at the bar. Experience shows that the most elementary instruction in the proper method of presentation of a given subject is required to be imparted to the young lawyer by the members of the firm with which he becomes associated. More than anywhere else the use of good English is to be found in a few of our journals which have set up high standards of literary excellence to which, in their editorial columns at least, they steadily conform.

There is no separate chair at Oxford, as at our Universities, for the teaching of English; and yet we have the testimony of President Thwing of the Western Reserve University, and of Mr. Howells and others, that the speech of our undergraduates compares most unfavorably with that of students of the English University. Knowledge of pure English is presupposed in the English undergraduate and is prerequisite of all honors. The influence of the home circle, and the preparatory school, the tone of the Press, the attention paid to correct conversation and the atmosphere of the University have sufficed to bring about this result without the aid of the special instructor. Even in the preparatory schools of England the use of faulty, ungrammatical English is regarded as a badge of vulgarity, attributable to low extraction. English is attempted to be taught in our Universities — where, moreover, such elementary instruction is very largely out of place—and the result is indeed deplorable.

In an article on "English Style" in the June number of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* of last year, it was pointed out that in the foremost University of our country the writing of English is taught out of a book called "English Composition," of which the professor of English Literature is the author, containing not only a few, but scores of departures from the use of correct English, and no small number of errors even in grammatical construction. As a text-book it is almost grotesque.

Professors who teach English in our Universities are not always experienced authors, or, if so, they make little use of their ability when writing books on English Composition. Frequently they have nothing of moment to say and succeed admirably in saying it. It is pitiful to think of such productions supplanting standard works on Rhetoric like the treatise of Archbishop Whately, though merely the study of even the best books on composition will not make men accomplished writers any more than would attendance at lectures about colors and brushes and canvas make men artists. Constant practice must accompany and follow the proper instruction.

In a thoughtful discussion in the November number of the "Atlantic Monthly" of last year on "The Writer and the University" Mr. Walter H. Page writes:

"Thus (I hope that I do not write too harsh a judgment) the art of writing well has come to be much neglected in our educational life; its

value has come to be misunderstood. It has, to a degree, even come to be despised. So far from being cultivated, except in rudimentary undergraduate work, it is left almost to take care of itself. The result is slovenly expressed erudition. The result is a too low value set on good speech or good writing even by the educated class. The result is a great gap between our scholars and the rest of the community. The result is that men of learning do not deliver to the people the knowledge that is gained by science and by historical study. The result is a detachment of our universities from the life of the people, and their loss of control and even of authority over the intellectual life of the nation; for the medium of communication is neglected."

Mr. Page, for the purpose of correcting the conditions he describes, urges that men and women who propose to make literature their life-work should have the benefit of professional training by instruction in a postgraduate school.

Interesting and instructive as his presentation of the plan is, it is difficult to see how a postgraduate school, dealing merely with the teaching of writing, could be productive of the best results. When it came to putting the idea of Mr. Page into effect, insurmountable difficulties, it is to be feared, would present themselves. Even though efficient instructors could be secured for such a school, the number of young men who could afford to continue their University studies beyond the four years of their undergraduate life would doubtless not be large. Then would arise questions as to the methods to be adopted. What would be written about? To write academically is not to train the mind in the best way possible for appropriate expression. The very thing which as a rule operates to make the composition of the student on a given theme imperfect and unsatisfactory is that, as he views it, his work serves no practical end, and is a mere task with no direct object-lesson. Even Squeers knew some of the correct methods of teaching, and doubtless the boys of his school never forgot their "winder" or their "bot-tinney," for, as we recall, the parlor "winder" was invariably washed and the garden weeded by the pupils after their intellectual struggle with these words in the spelling class. Law students who have the advantage of the moot-court come nearer to a practical result than when studying text-books and leading cases, because what they do by way of preparation in brief and argument is to have an actual and immediate application in the moot-court, though, oddly enough, this institution of the moot-court has been abandoned in some of our

law schools. The young lawyer, after having been made generally familiar as a student with the principles of the law, does more to make his ideas a part of himself by a short time devoted in an actual litigation to the preparation of a brief and by subsequent oral argument than he could accomplish by prolonged study. The clinic and hospital experience furnish the true training for the physician. The student who writes his essay, as is now the fashion, at the instance of the college professor, will rarely acquire that degree of confidence essential for acceptable writing. Until this results the student will probably have a view as to his style somewhat similar to that which, according to George Eliot, Amos Barton entertained as to his oratory: "though he thought himself strong, he did not *feel* himself strong. Nature had given him the opinion, but not the sensation."

Some of the articles appearing in these University publications might well be the successful result of competition upon a given theme assigned by the professor of literature after conference with the supervisory editors. Thus at the outset the student would know that superior work on his part would not mean merely perfunctory or private commendation by the professor. The writing of the theme in the first instance would be a kind of preliminary trial or weeding-out process. Then would come the advice of the editors whose knowledge of praiseworthy expression would probably be equal if not superior to that of the professor of literature. As one successful effort followed another, the young man would come to be one of the associate editors, when only a general supervision of his work would be required. Constant rivalry, not only among those who intended to adopt the profession of journalism, or even of the law, but generally among the large body of students, should naturally follow, and it is not difficult to see that amid such surroundings no prizes for popularity would be awarded to students whose conversation was cheap and slipshod and who evinced a contempt for literary aims and pursuits. Even some return like that associated with a fellowship might be connected with an editorship, and what ordinarily is but an irksome task would thus become a distinct privilege.

The best results will not be attained by the students of composition until, by constant drill, such as writing for the University publication would make possible, he is made to understand that a correct style does not consist in ornamentation or adornment,

but in the employment of apt and appropriate words and phrases and their judicious utilization in arrangement for the adequate presentation of the varying shades of thought. As a rule, without this experience he will seek to substitute for precise phraseology and for harmony of proportions a kind of writing fundamentally wrong; but attempted to be made acceptable by decoration. Almost invariably we find in association with an unhappy inartistic selection of words ambitious attempts to write with the aid of metaphors and similes, though the authors fail to distinguish between correct and incorrect figures of speech as readily as they would probably mistake toadstools for mushrooms.

In literary production the transition is treacherously easy from that which might be distinguished by real charm to what is merely commonplace. From Shakespeare down through all the line of gifted authors until we reach Carlyle, little as we may be accustomed to recognize the fact, it is to their choice and marshalling of words, that we are able to trace much of their surpassing excellence. Emerson says we should appreciate in Shakespeare "dexterity in the use of these weapons" much more than we do were it not for the display of his "heroic strength," but this strength, even in Shakespeare, more often than we suppose, is found solely in this wondrous dexterity, if by dexterity Emerson means unerring precision. We need only open the pages of Shakespeare almost at random to have this truth brought home to us. There is the melody of language in such lines as those of Perdita:

"—Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares and take
The winds of March with beauty."

At other times we find employed a wholly different kind of words, as in the apostrophe to England by the dying John of Gaunt; or when Henry IV, the King, craves in vain the sleep vouchsafed "to the wet sea boy . . . upon the high and giddy mast."

Almost with the stroke of a pen Shakespeare portrays the degradation of Antony, who

"is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gypsy's lust."

When Lady Macbeth would compass Duncan's murder, her words are those of the human tigress. The foretelling by Romeo of the coming dawn is no graceful paraphrase of the imagery of

the ancient poets, but the marvellously faithful and creative description of genius. Cordelia, with the magic of exact words, puts into a sentence the story of her sisters' infamy for the exposure of Lear to the merciless storm:

"Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire."

Substitute a book synonym for a single word in the great passages of Shakespeare, and much of the splendor of the picture has faded. His words of precision are words of inspiration and of revelation.

When Carlyle thus speaks of Burns we listen to the music of our language:

"Neither will his works, even as they are, pass away from the memory of men. While the Shakespeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl fishers on their waves; this little Valclusa fountain will also arrest the eye—for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship—bursts from the depths of the earth with a full gushing torrent into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters and muse among its rocks and pines."

It is with the nobility of language that he writes of Goethe:

"He who would learn to reconcile reverence with clearness; to deny and defy what is false, yet believe and worship what is true; amid raging factions bent on what is either altogether empty or has substance in it only for a day, which stormfully convulse and tear hither and thither a distracted expiring system of society to readjust himself aright; and, working for the world and in the world, keep himself unspotted from the world,—let him look here."

From the mouth of Cagliostro we hear the ominous mutterings of the coming upheaval in the social order of a great nation:

"Does the EMPIRE OF IMPOSTURE waver . . . as it rocks and heaves, not in travail throes but in death throes? Yes, Light rays, piercing clear that salute the Heavens; lo, they kindle it. Their starry clearness becomes as red Hell-fire. IMPOSTURE is in flames, Imposture is burnt up, one Red-Sea of Fire, wild, billowing, enwraps the world; with its fire-tongue it licks at the very Stars."

True enough it is that such illustrations may suggest the counsels of perfection, but a faithful study of the unfailing exactness in the choice and use of words by the literary masters will recall some of the fundamental principles of correct composition. And when the infinite variety, adaptability and resources of our vocabulary with the requisitions it has made upon all the great

tongues is understood by the experienced writer, trained in the right atmosphere by study and practice, it is possible for him, having something to say, to attain to a style which will have the distinguishing merit of precision and strength and grace, and on occasions, of great wealth of utterance. Certainly men who drink at such fountains of inspiration will not thirst any longer for the ignoble, debasing things in literature, nor will they be satisfied with much that is proffered to us by the authors of to-day.

Take, now, as an example of the prevalent methods of writing, selections not from a student's composition for submission to the professor of literature, but from a recent address by the president of one of our most important Universities to the representatives of another well-known University:

"True democracy, therefore, while seeking by all possible means to improve the quality of its legislatures, and to make them representative of principles and ideas rather than of special and local interests, will strengthen the Executive *arm* and *protect* it from legislative *invasion* in matters purely administrative."

Throughout the address—which was distinctly elevated in tone—there appear similar infelicities of style which it would be impossible for the most friendly critic to commend.

To such a pass have we come that the following quotation from a reprint by a prominent American publishing house of the "Thackeray" by Anthony Trollope in the "English Men of Letters" series is permitted to pass unnoticed:

"At the usual evening hour the chapel bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time—and just as the last bell struck, a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little, and quickly said, 'Adsum'—and fell back. It was the word we used at school when names were called; and lo, he whose heart was that of a little child, had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of his Maker!"

"His Maker" is called upon by the compositor to do service for "the Master," of Thackeray, precisely as false and spurious expressions are substituted by many authors of to-day for what should be true and genuine.

Though the highest art of expression were not developed in the University publications, certainly we should not find the student guilty of such lapses in himself or tolerant of them in others as appear in the examples just given; and, judging from experience, it would be unreasonable to expect that anything approaching

like benefit would result from the postgraduate teaching recommended by Mr. Page, or from the adoption of any other expedient yet suggested for the correction of the conditions whose existence we must all concede.

Then again, even this relative advantage of inculcating a correct style in speech and writing is in itself but means to an end, for we may readily believe that the whole atmosphere of the University would be purified and invigorated through the wholesome influence of such publications. What the accompanying revival of a real love for literature would mean to young men in their student years and afterwards when they have gone out into the world is scarcely to be estimated or even guessed at, and it is not extravagant to think that it would have its marked effect upon the productive as well as the appreciative side of literature. Literature of itself, as John Morley says, will not make fine citizens; but the pursuit or even love of it will do more in this country than any other single agency to fit men to face the solemn responsibilities which are a part of the privilege of citizenship, while at the same time it would enable us to appraise at its true value much of the demagoguery and humbug now preached among us by priests of the new gospel of a cheap denunciation.

The student with muddled thoughts, poor enunciation and feeble expression is blind and deaf to the finer things of life and unsuited for the highest enjoyment or service. Give him tasks which he will come to understand as having an intimate relation to the true aims of existence, and his intellectual and spiritual horizon will have been appreciably widened. He sees things in their true perspective; and listening to the music and learning of the mystery of the universe, he looks out upon life from college windows, and readjusts his conception of ambition and purpose for the world of activity he is to enter. We may well believe that a group of such young men going out from our Universities, aglow with ardor, would, year by year, recruit the ranks of that righteous remnant in which Matthew Arnold, in company with all thoughtful men, believes is to be found the saving grace of our nation.

In this country, more, perhaps, than in any other land, do the ever-thickening problems of existence present themselves.

The student, fresh from his peaceful University surroundings, is suddenly to be confronted, among other things, with the poverty and misery of his fellow men; with crude, ill-considered measures for the relief of public ills, and with socialism or anarchy stalking abroad with busy, unruly tongue, and sometimes with knife and bomb when it concludes that the time for talk has gone by. On the other hand, our life of to-day is throbbing with momentous impulses. Not the dogma of the church, but its creed of righteousness, is being preached among men. The obstructions to the progress of the world, behind which lie entrenched its selfishness and greed and indifference to the needs and even the rights of others, are being carried by assault by a great army of men consecrated at the altars of self-sacrifice to the regeneration of the thoughts and the hopes and the ideals of mankind. Amid the conflicting forces of such environment, the graduate who is to perform his duty to society will in large degree find his contribution to be distinguished or ignoble according as, in proficiency to use his mother tongue, he is fitted or unfitted for the task. Even in a very practical sense and quite apart from any spiritual considerations, mastery over expression means mastery over men and mastery of opportunity. If their vision be not clear, men cannot hope to assume leadership of others; on the contrary, they themselves are bound throughout life to be in the ranks and liable to stumble even there.

Not often is it vouchsafed to one, as it has been to Mr. Harvey, to suggest an idea for the advantage of a whole people. We owe him a debt of obligation, to be discharged also to the man and to the institution with the public spirit to make the idea a reality. The architect with a great plan has appeared; the builders ought not to be wanting.

Under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, standing aloft amid the ebb and flow of the never-ceasing energy of London, there is a tablet to the glory of Sir Christopher Wren: "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*"; a like tribute should be the portion of those who make possible this new creation that, to the imagination of men, will be as a true temple of learning, from which will go forth, year by year for all time, the long procession of splendid youth disciplined in thought and utterance and quickened in culture and in aspiration for their service to the world.

JOSEPH S. AUERBACH.